

Iceland – Land of Fire and Ice

June 11-21, 2017

4.5 credit hours Cost \$3700. With credit. \$3450. Without credit

Does not include airfare.

Flight will begin in Denver on the evening before.

Day 1: June 17. Flights are usually overnight, so we will arrive in Iceland in the early morning. On the flight, participants will read the Introductory Packet on culture and history of Iceland. As we are nearing Iceland, glue your eyes to the sea and watch as we fly over the Westmann Islands and Surtsey, the scientific experiment island that we will learn about. As we drive from the airport at Keflavik into the capital city, we are driving over beautiful lava flows. Study the different textures and characteristics of the flows and hear a volcanic introduction. Today we will explore the culture and fascinating architecture of Reykjavik by taking the city tour bus. We will hop off of the bus to tour the beautiful geometric glass building Harpa – the Reykjavik Concert Hall and Conference Center.



We will also climb to the top of Hallgrímskirkja Church for a bird's eye view of the city. We will walk along the Reykjavik Old Harbor to view the fishing fleets. Our next treat will be to tour the Saga Museum where we will learn about the history of the Viking settlements. Sagas are oral stories that tell the history of Iceland from the 10 – 14th Century. Stories of the Viking, the settlements, the conflicts, the loves of early Iceland are told with humor and gusto

Day 2: Strap on those crampons and tour the tongue of the 4th largest glacier in Iceland, the Sólheimajökull outlet for the huge Mýrdalsjökull Glacier for a walk on the ice that you will never forget. As we journey to the glacier, we will pass right beneath famous Eyjafjallajökull volcano that caused so much air traffic problems over Europe in the spring of 2010. This glacier walk is rated easy and does not entail mountaineering skills. Crawl through ice caves, explore ice sculptures, and peer down deep crevasses. Stop for a warm bowl of Icelandic soup and then explore the waterfalls of Skógafoss and Seljalandsfoss and the Skogar Folk Museum on our return trip to Reykjavik

Day 3: Today we will tour the southeast section of Iceland with Iceland Volcano Tours. Since this family owns the land here, only people who take this tour get to see the fascinating behind the scenes volcanic topography. The tour will include hiking inside a volcanic cinder cone, a lava tube tour, a visit to a

geothermic energy plant, a hike through the Rift Zone, and a hike through a fascinating geothermic area alive with fumaroles, mudpots, and sulfur vents. We will learn about the different types of lava and what causes some eruptions to be explosive while others merely flow. One of the wonderful parts of this tour is the glimpse into Icelandic culture with a local tour guide. What could be a better end than a luxurious dip in the world famous Blue Lagoon, the most visited place in Iceland. The milky white silica water of the Blue Lagoon is said to have magical healing powers. Sleep Reykavik. www.volcanotours.is

Day 4: We will pick up the rental car and drive to Landeyjaharbour to catch a ferry to the famous Vestmannaeyjar (Westmann) Islands, for a volcanic, cultural, and wildlife adventure. The Westmann Islands is an archipelago of around 15 islands that are some of the newest land on earth. The southernmost island, Surtsey, was created by a new eruption from 1963-1967. Surtsey is a grand scientific experiment on succession. No people are allowed on this new bit of land except scientists in suits to ensure that they are not bringing in any seeds, plants or animals onto the island. Succession is the natural change in species in an environment over time. During primary succession, soil and all of the organisms are destroyed. When Surtsey rose from the sea as molten lava, it was absolutely sterile. Surtsey may be one of the only chances that scientists will have to study succession without interference by humans. The eruption that formed Surtsey is the longest continuous eruption that Iceland has ever experienced. The only inhabited Westmann Island is Heimaey, which also felt the volcanic wrath. In January 1973, Islanders were awakened in the middle of the night to the horrifying sight of a 1600 meter fissure eruption happening in their backyards. Luckily, the day before the eruption a ferocious storm blew out to sea, which brought all of the village fishing vessels into port. The eruption started at 1:58 am and by 2:30 am almost all of the villagers were on fishing boats being evacuated. The flowing lava poured through town burying homes and churches. We are going to Heimaey to study the results of this eruption. The Westmann Island cliffs are also home to 330 species of birds including puffins, skuas, scaups, and eiders. Join a boat tour to circle the Westmann's to view millions of birds, whales, orcas, seals, sea lions, and otters. Spend the night on Heimaey to enjoy the culture of the local islanders.

Day 5: Today we will catch the ferry back to the mainland, continuing our search for oceanic wildlife. During our whole trip to Iceland, we will document all mammals and birds that we see. Exploring volcanic terrain, we will see evidence of massive mudflows and learn how the island of Iceland is expanding with each eruption. We will then drive to the most widely publicized area of Iceland - the Golden Circle. This circle includes Þingvellir, the national park where democracy had its birthplace. One of the most exciting features of Þingvellir is that we can walk on the European Continental Plate and look across the valley to see the American Continental Plate. After we tour the visitor center, we will take a short hike down into the rift that separates the plates. The real treat of Þingvellir, is that we will don dry suits and take a short snorkel tour between the two plates. Imagine being able to reach out your hand and touch the European plate and touch the North American Plate with the other one.

Day 6: We will continue our tour of the Golden Circle with a short drive to the most spectacular waterfall that I've ever seen, Gullfoss Falls. Our hike here will take us to the overlooks and to a short tour of the visitor's center. Our next stop along the Golden Circle is the hydrothermic area of Geysir. The rest of the world has adopted the Icelandic term for a shooting spray of water

driven by a hydrothermic area. Yes, Geysir was the original one and it erupts with a beautiful bubble of iridescent blue, so get your cameras ready. Geysir is also the site of extensive other geothermal features, such as fumaroles, sulphur vents, boiling mudpots etc. We will drive to Borgarnes where we will spend the night. As a special treat this evening, we will soak in one of Iceland's natural geothermic hot springs and learn the geology that creates hot springs.



Day 7: Today we will explore Snæfellsjökull National Park. This volcano was made famous by Jules Verne in his novel, "Journey to the Center of the Earth." While driving the "Ring Road" of Snæfellsjökull, we will see lighthouses, bird cliffs, black sand beaches, and a fishing museum as well as take several short hikes. Mt. Snæfellsjökull has long held a unique place in the world of energy. Many people believe that the glacier itself is a powerful source of energy, one of seven such places in the world. "Believers claim the glacier works like a magnet, pulling people in closer with its incredibly high energy. Proximity to the glacier magnifies your emotions, so whatever it is you are feeling, you will feel it with much greater intensity at Snæfellsjökull. Other beliefs range from . . . the glacier will reveal insights . . ." Iceland Bradt Tour Book. Which brings us to the subject of the *huldufolk* of Icelandic Folk Tales. Huldufolk include trolls, fairies, elves, and spiritual beings that many people in Iceland strongly believe in. J R R Tolkein based the characters in Lord of the Rings on the folklore of Iceland. Throughout our tour, we will watch carefully for the many examples of Icelandic construction where large rocks were left undisturbed in the middle of a site so that the *huldufolk* would not be disturbed. Sleep in

Stykkisholmur. This National Park includes many other wonders such as the magnificent Snæfellsjökull (Snæfell Glacier), Diúpalónssandur beach, Saxhóll volcano crater, Lóndrangar the two massive lava formations, Sönghellir (the singing cave) and Rauðfeldargjá the hidden waterfall. Huge flocks of Arctic Terns nest in Snæfellsjökull National Park. The Arctic Tern has the longest migration of any animal on the planet, migrating from the south pole to the north pole, which is over 70000 km. every year.

Day 8: Today we will ferry across Breidafjörður Bay to Brjanslaekur, on Iceland's largest fjord. This area is a cultural highlight of Iceland where many of the sagas have their roots. This area of one of Iceland's most enchanting parts. Sprinkled with islands, Breidafjörður Bay is said to have been created by a group of trolls, who were digging with their hands and throwing the dirt behind them between their legs to create the islands. Not only will we be glued to our binoculars to see the spectacular bird life, but we will also be treated to the view of giant orange and white jellyfish. We will now start our inland tour back to Reykjavik. As we travel, we will learn many of the legends and folklore of native Iceland. Our wildlife and bird viewing should also be spectacular today, as this is the legendary nesting grounds for thousands of ocean going birds, whales, dolphins, otters, seals, sea lions etc

Day 9: Today we will return to Reykjavik by driving along a section of the famous "Ring Road." We will explore how the Icelanders construct deep underwater highway systems to cross some of their largest fjords. Today is a great day to learn glacial geomorphology and terminology as we traverse this volcanic and glaciated landscape. **270 miles driving. Start early** After we arrive back in Reykjavik, we may tour some other fascinating museums including the National Museum of Iceland, the Open-Air Folk Museum - Arbæjarsafn Day, Maritime Museum or perhaps the Museum of Penises. **Stay 4th Floor Hotel**

10: As we wait for our flight times, we take time to shop the unique stores of Reykjavik or tour other museums on your own. As you start your flight home today, you will probably start planning your winter time tour to Iceland to see the Northern Lights.

